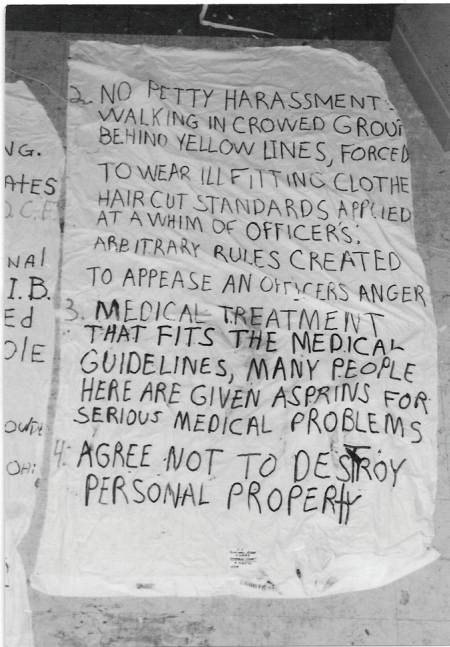


NEVER DORMANT



ON DEATH ROW

siddique hasan & bomani shakur on ferguson and
movements against police violence



To read more by Siddique Hasan, Bomani Shakur, and to learn more about the Lucasville Uprising of 1993 please go to:

lucasvilleamnesty.org

To find out more about our work as a political prisoner support group please go to:

sacprisonersupport.wordpress.com

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On April 11, 1993, the Southern Ohio Correctional Facility in Lucasville, OH, was rocked when prisoners took control in what was the longest prison uprising in U.S. history. Prisoners were fighting back against a long string of new, harsh policies being implemented by the new warden, Arthur Tate. Mandated Tuberculin skin testing with injections containing alcohol, which Muslim prisoners politely requested an alternative testing method to. Tate's refusal to comply, along with his utter disrespect of Muslims, was the straw that broke the camel's back.

Rising as one, with racial differences ignored, the prisoners took control of the facility. Several guards were taken hostage in the process. For eleven days a standoff existed. During that time, nine prisoners and one guard were killed.

Siddique Hasan played a key role in negotiating a peaceful end to the siege, preventing additional violence & death from the state.

The Lucasville rebellion sent a shock wave of fear into the heart of the prison system, and the state was determined to teach a lesson to those who stand up & fight back. In the sham trials that followed, Hasan and four other leaders, Black and white, were scapegoated onto death row.

Although no eyewitness testimony and no material evidence link Hasan to the death of the cop, the state used jailhouse snitch testimony, along with a predominantly white jury in Cincinnati (a city notorious for its institutionalized racism), to get a conviction against Hasan in a trial reeking with the foul odors of racism and Islamaphobia.

Ohio prosecutors allege that Keith Lamar was the leader of a group of prisoners dubbed "the death squad" and was responsible for ordering the deaths of five prisoners during the prison uprising, at Lucasville in 1993. Since the uprising he has taken the African name Bomani Shakur.

Bomani Shakur has proclaimed his innocence. He reports that police beat him, left him naked in freezing conditions for long periods in cells without plumbing in order to make him confess to acts he didn't commit and to get him to become a witness for the state. He encouraged other prisoners not to make false confessions or turn state's evidence.

Siddique Hasan, and Bomani Shakur are now on death row as a part of the Lucasville Uprising.

On August 9, 2014 in Ferguson, Missouri eighteen year old Black youth, Mike Brown was murdered by white police officer, Darren Wilson. It didn't take long for this to spark a rebellion that was felt by Ferguson, the entire St. Louis area, and the world. There are communities all over north America that have been dealing with racism, and terrorism implemented by the police. The courage of those who took part in the uprising that swelled Ferguson and the surrounding area inspired those areas that have been feeling that same repression to fight back just the same.

It has been a long time since Siddique Hasan, and Bomani Shakur could actually stand face to face and discuss the fight that exists inside or outside the prison walls, for a better world. They've typed up a reconstruction of discussions they've had on these events, and are eager to share it with the world.

They have been locked in solitary confinement for over two decades, while they struggle against death sentences. After years of constant effort and repeated hunger strikes, they've recently won the ability to spend their scant hours outside their cells together. It is not just what they discuss here in the following pages of this zine, but the setting where this discussion takes place, and the understanding that this is what takes place when these two great minds come together.



Bomani: So we've been sitting here for the past several weeks watching the fallout of recent police shootings of unarmed Black men, and obviously it's been inspiring to see so many people--Black, White, young and old--come out in a forceful show of solidarity against the powers that be. Tell me, what has been the most powerful impression you've had? And, what kind of connections do you see between the recent shootings and some of the other ills that plague society?

Hasan: The most powerful impression was seeing the youth of Ferguson, and people from its surrounding areas, come out in droves after hearing about the unprovoked and senseless death of Michael Brown by the gun of a police officer. While curious onlookers appeared on the scene, the majority of the crowd was there to display their love and last respects to their fallen comrade, to offer moral support to his family, or to simply express their anger over the killing of another unarmed Black man in this country. From behind enemy lines we have been witnessing the wholesale killings of our people, and have been wondering what will it take to stop this epidemic that's running rampant throughout our communities? So when I saw the unrest unfolding in Ferguson, I was really moved by seeing so many young brothers and sisters set aside their artificial differences, group labels, and begin to unify their efforts in order to change this racist and exploitative system which targets, kills, and disenfranchises the poor and people of color.

The negative critiques about their actions were expected, for it's typical for those who stand on the safe sidelines, or sit in the comfort of their homes, to criticize vandalism and unrest under all circumstances. However, let's be realistic, if it wasn't for those brave revolutionaries saying, in so many words and deeds, "f--k the police" and "Black Lives Matter," the systematic killing of Blacks would not be getting the international exposure it is, and changes would not be forthcoming. So they must ignore the critiques of naysayers, as well as pacifists, and continue to push for changes that will ultimately bring about real justice and equality for all Americans, especially economic equality.

Bomani: I agree wholeheartedly. While I am deeply impressed by the will and tenacity that has been shown, I'm concerned that traditional, mainstream organizations will intervene and stifle the momentum of these young people. And isn't that how it always goes? I mean, I don't want to disregard people like Al Sharpton, Jesse Jackson and so on, because they serve a critical purpose; however, instead of leading the movement and possibly steering it in an unproductive direction, they should either follow or play a supportive

role. In order for things to truly change, things have to go beyond duplicating the strategies of the past. Yes, body cameras are needed, and police officers need to be held accountable for the crimes they commit. Those are no-brainers, things that should already be happening. However, these modest concessions should not be viewed as a cure-all.

There's something fundamentally wrong with this system. It's broken! And the conversation should not be centered on how to "fix it," but on how to change it. I mean, even Martin Luther King thought this way. In fact, after the march on Washington, he turned his attention toward cultivating a Poor People's Movement. Of course he was murdered before his vision could be realized, but we need to pick up where he left off: challenging the status quo. In other words, no more business as usual.

Hasan: From the tragedies of Trayvon Martin, Michael Brown, Eric Garner, Tamir Rice, and several other untimely deaths, there has emerged a nationwide movement being shepherded by some very inspiring, educated, articulated and thoughtful young activists and organizations--such as Dante Barry of Million Hoodies; Tory Russell, co-founder of Hands Up United; Ashley Yates of Millennial Activists United; Alicia Garza of Black Lives Matter; Montague Simmons of Organization for Black Struggle; Synead Nichols and Umaara Elliott of Millions March NYC; New Abolitionist Association (in Cleveland), to name a few. Therefore, I can identify with your concern about "traditional organizations" and their leadership, because today's youth are sick and tired of being stopped and frisked, assaulted, disenfranchised and seeing their generation murdered and imprisoned on a massive scale. And since the older cast of civil rights leaders have not been able to solve these problems, my position is: the most honorable and dignified thing for them to do is to pass on the leadership baton to a new generation of capable leaders, because our youth are no longer feeling them. If they're unwilling to relinquish the baton (and I'm sure they want), then the least they could do is stop criticizing our youth for not following their unconditional nonviolence stance. I don't know if you've heard about it, but in Ferguson, they told Rev. Jesse Jackson, "Get the hell outta here! You ain't no leader."

On the issues of body cameras and accountability, I support both of them. But using available technology and holding police accountable are not going to solve all our problems with police. If body and dash-board cameras, or cellphones for that matter, were the answer to our victimization, then why was Rodney King, Oscar Grant, John Crawford III, Eric Garner, and Tamir Rice, not protected? You don't have to answer that. My point is, we need a

complete overhaul of the criminal justice system and policing in poor and Black communities, for not only have cops lied about why they had to use deadly or excessive force against their victims, they have also fabricated and concealed favorable evidence to put many of us in jails and prisons, which is one of the main contributors to mass incarceration.

Bomani: That's right. Still, as I think about it, at least most of us were afforded the pretense of a trial for our so-called crimes. Eric Garner, Tamir Rice, Mike Brown, and the others, weren't given that; instead, they were summarily executed--no trial, no jury, no due process, no nothing. And then to somehow justify what was done to them by saying, "Well, the police officers were in fear of their lives" is simply unacceptable. I mean, how can you justify killing a 12-year-old boy who was playing with a toy gun at the playground? It's absurd! I tell you, man, my eyes fill with tears every time I think about Tamir. I mean, I feel the same or similarly about all of them, but I have a 12-year-old nephew, and the thought that he could be gunned down by the very people whose job it is to protect him is maddening. And so we have to teach our children about the sordid history of this country and stop pretending that, just because we have a Black president, we live in a post-racial society.

Racism killed Tamir Rice, Mike Brown, et al., and the fact that a grand jury refused to hold the officers responsible is the surest indication that those in power are blinded by hate, bigotry, and fear. And, yes, as you alluded to, mass incarceration, the so-called war on drugs, and so on, are all part and parcel of the discriminatory practices that have always been a mainstay of this system of injustice. And yet, the whole country--Black and White people--stood back and watched as the prison population ballooned to over 2 million people (not to mention the millions on probation or parole). It's crazy! I mean, no one questioned where all the guns and drugs came from, or more importantly, why Blacks are sentenced to longer prison sentences for the same "crimes" as Whites. So, yeah, it's encouraging to see the "coming together" of so many people of different backgrounds and ethnicities because at the end of the day, we're not talking about a Black or White problem; we're talking about a human problem, something that's going to take all of us working together to solve. We have to understand that. I mean, it's no longer just a matter of what's happening to Black people; in reality, the whole planet is at stake--and if, as Richard Wright suggested, this country can't find its way to a human path, if it can't inform conduct with a deep sense of life, then all of us, Black as well as White, are going down the same drain. That's real talk.

Hasan: That "pretense of a trial" is exactly what was afforded to us in our Lucasville cases, cases which are a serious affront and travesty of justice. This pretense happens to poor people because most people in society don't seem to really care how the criminal-justice system works so differently for the underclass. As Atty. Bryan Stevenson has said, "We have a criminal-justice system that treats you better if you're rich and guilty than if you're poor and innocent." And that's what this whole movement is about: equal treatment under the law and cops being held accountable for their bad behavior. This society would never tolerate Black cops routinely killing White kids and fabricating evidence against them, so why should Blacks tolerate it? All our people are asking for is a fair shake and a piece of the American Dream, which has only been a nightmare for us. And, I realize it's going to take a mixture of ingredients in civil disobedience--stopping traffic, peaceful sit-ins and die-ins, selectively boycotting businesses, picketing, among other methods of stiff resistance--to solve centuries of racism, mistrust and animosity that subsists between the police and the Black community. And contrary to popular beliefs, the police do not possess the right to become judge, jury and executioner.

Bomani: I agree. Under a system of laws, everyone should be held to the same standards and treated equally--and what Bryan Stevenson is saying is that justice itself has become a commodity, something that is reserved for those with money. And it's this--the commodification of humanity--that lies beneath most of the problems that plague society. When I mentioned earlier that the planet is at stake, I was speaking in terms of global warming and climate change which, on the surface, seems disconnected from the present problems of police brutality, poverty, mass incarceration, etc., but beneath it all is this relentless push for profits over people. So, in summation, I guess the most important thing I would say to young activists (if I had the opportunity) is: stay focused and never forget that we are all in this together.

Hasan: Spoken like a champ. And, yes, we're all in this struggle together, and we can't afford to allow certain forces to divide and conquer us. The same government that is oppressing and exploiting people out there in society is the same government that is oppressing and exploiting us behind enemy lines. But, as long as we remain united and determined to make revolutionary changes across the board, those changes are inescapable because the power of the people is greater than those in power.

Man, I hope and pray that this new group of young activists, that have struck

fear in the hearts of the powers that be, will capitalize on some of the apparent mistakes made by the Occupy Movement--namely, not having a central leader, not having specific goals, not being in it for the long haul, and not having adequate funds to implement their revolutionary agenda. In short, they must learn from their predecessors mistakes.





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